DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 255 CE 039 297

AUTHOR Henry, Ann; Teschendorf, JoAnn
TITLE Employment Action Center's Demonstration Older Worker Project. Operated June 1, 1983 through November 31, 1983. Final Outcome Report.
INSTITUTION Employment Action Center, St. Louis Park, MN.
SPONS AGENCY Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Ottawa (Ontario). Employment Support Services Branch.
PUB DATE Jan 84
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Discrimination; Attitude Change; Career Change; *Career Counseling; Demonstration Programs; *Dislocated Workers; Displaced Homemakers; *Employer Attitudes; Employment Practices; Employment Problems; *Employment Programs; Federal Programs; Job Layoff; Job Search Methods; Job Skills; Job Training; Labor Market; *Middle Aged Adults; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Reentry Workers; Retraining; Skill Obsolescence; *Unemployment
IDENTIFIERS Job Training Partnership Act 1982; Minnesota (Hennepin County)

ABSTRACT

The Older Worker Project was conducted to provide employment services to unemployed persons aged 45 and older who live in the western part of the Hennepin County (Minneapolis, Minnesota) area. Although the expected result was permanent employment of the participants, the intention of this demonstration project was to refine service approaches based on increased experience with this population. The project was staffed by a full-time counselor and a part-time community relations coordinator. Project services included job assessment, career planning, vocational counseling, support group, and job placement assistance. Workshop services were designed to assist people in setting job goals and updating interviewing and job-seeking skills. The community relations component included outreach to inform persons 45 and over about the project and development of educational tools to overcome employer resistance to hiring older workers. The best approaches to recruitment were found to be Sunday classified advertisements and mailings to churches. Employer awareness was most effectively raised by written materials, since employers tended to feel defensive during personal contacts. The support group was found to be beneficial to the participants, but the job club was not successful. At the conclusion of the project, 22 of the project's 31 participants found employment at an average wage of $5.10 per hour, a placement rate of 71 percent. Recommendations were made to work toward a national older worker employment policy, to promote awareness of the skills of the older worker in the private sector, and to increase funding for employment programs for older persons. (KC)

ED246255

FINAL OUTCOME REPORT

EMPLOYMENT ACTION CENTER'S
DEMONSTRATION OLDER WORKER PROJECT

OPERATED JUNE 1, 1983 THROUGH NOVEMBER 31, 1983

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D Atterbury

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE039297

Authors:

Ann Henry, Community Relations Coordinator
JoAnn Teschendorf, Vocational Counselor
EMPLOYMENT ACTION CENTER
A Division of Multi Resource Centers, Inc.
6715 Minnetonka Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
612-925-9195

1/84

An Equal Opportunity/Nondiscrimination Program

INDEX

TOPIC	PAGE
Project Funding and Purpose	1
Program Design/Redesign	1-2
Literature Search	2
Community Relations/Recruitment	3
Characteristics of Persons Served	3-4
Special Needs and Problems	5-6
Assets of the Experienced Worker	7
Intake	8
Counseling	9-10
Support Group	11
Job Club	12
Resource Library	12
Classroom Training	12
Job Seeking/Job Development	12-13
Employer Response	14
Employer Education Component	15
Program Results	16
Conclusions	17-18
Recommendations for Future Actions	19
Addendum A, Research Resources	20-21
Addendum B, Resource Books Particularly Useful for Persons 45 and Over	22

INTRODUCTION

The National recession which reached its depths in 1983 resulted in widespread unemployment among persons age 45 and over. This effect of the recession was noticeable to the Employment Action Center (EAC), as large numbers of persons in this age group began applying for employment services. EAC'S employment services had been developed to address the needs of a broader age group, age 16 and over.

These older adults, never seen in such numbers before by EAC, often had extensive, stable work experience. They had expected that loyalty to both their companies and the work ethic would be rewarded by steady employment until retirement. Most program applicants over age 45 were long-term unemployed. Many had been the last in their job classification to receive a lay-off notice due to their seniority. Late lay-offs worked against the older workers. Their younger co-workers had first chance at any openings in their field, filling existing jobs.

While possessing maturity, positive work attitudes and experience, these adults were job seeking in a job market radically different from that in which they had obtained their previous positions. Job openings were scarce. Many companies did not view older adults as potential employees, regardless of their qualifications. Job search techniques and interviewing skills needed to land a job had changed. For example, the Sunday want ads were not a productive method of job seeking.

Anger and desperation were a common response by the older adult to their unemployment. Many were experiencing crisis in their family/marital situation. A frequent response was bitterness toward the system in which they had so strongly believed.

Yet, this age group had a lot to offer prospective employers. EAC wanted to assist them in resuming productive worklives. EAC applied for a grant with two other local organizations, H.I.R.E.D. and Hennepin Technical Centers, to develop a short-term demonstration project. EAC has attempted, with this report,to share our learning experiences and identify approaches we found successful. EAC learned that, with special services, the long-term unemployed older worker is able to succeed in the job market despite substantial barriers. This age group has many work-related assets to be built upon and reinforced.

Resources to assist the unemployed older adult are scarce. Yet, this age group will continue to grow in size in upcoming decades. Technological displacement of older adults will continue. National efforts to better secure the future of older adults in the job market are essential.

Deborah Atterberry
EAC Director

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PROJECT FUNDING

The Employment Action Center's Older Worker Project was funded under the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) by the Hennepin County Private Industry Council. The project period was June 1, 1983 through November 31, 1983.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project was to provide employment services to unemployed persons aged 45 and over who live in the West Hennepin County area. The expected result was their permanent employment. As a demonstration project EAC began the project with a specific planned design. However, the intention of the project was to further refine service approaches based on increased experience with this population.

EMPLOYMENT ACTION CENTER'S DESCRIPTION

The Employment Action Center (EAC) is a division of Multi Resource Centers, Inc., a non-profit human service agency. EAC provides services to unemployed persons through a variety of programs with the purpose of assisting them in obtaining permanent jobs. EAC is located in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, a suburb adjacent to Minneapolis.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA SERVED BY THE PROJECT

EAC's Older Worker Project was established to provide services to persons age 45 and over who resided in Hennepin County west of Minneapolis. The service area included 27 municipalities in a geographic area covering 160 square miles. This area is composed of densely populated suburbs adjacent to Minneapolis, less dense bedroom communities, and more sparsely populated, rural areas on the western edge of Hennepin County.

PROGRAM DESIGN/REDESIGN

The project was staffed by a full-time counselor and a part-time community relations coordinator.

Thirty-one participants were served. Project services included job assessment, career planning, vocational counseling, support group, job placement assistance. Workshop services were designed to assist people in setting job goals, updating interviewing and job seeking skills. The community relations component included outreach to inform persons 45 and over about the project and development of educational tools to overcome employer resistance to hiring this age group.

The initial design of the community relations component was: review of

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

information on older adults pertaining to employment; community relations/recruitment; coordinating an employer advisory committee; implementation and design of employer awareness seminars and designing an experienced worker brochure and newsletter.

After the second project month some revisions were made in this design:

- The response to member recruitment for an employer advisory committee was very low. Plans to form the Committee were abandoned and the Metropolitan Consortium on Older Employees was utilized for employer input on the project. This is an existing group of representatives from the private, academic and public sectors that are studying the issues of the older worker.

- The support group for the project participants was co-facilitated by the Project Counselor and Community Relations Coordinator. Co-facilitation proved to be very beneficial in developing the educational materials since the Community Relations Coordinator had direct exposure to unemployed Older Workers.

- Employer awareness was mainly promoted in written format. After having direct client contact and examining existing research it seemed more conducive to take an indirect, non-threatening approach to employers. Hopefully, the written word would be remembered in the market place and would not place employers in a defensive position concerning the hiring of older workers. Also, more people could be reached through mailings, informing them of Employment Action Center and the project.

LITERATURE SEARCH

Research findings were reviewed to determine the availability of information pertaining to employment of older workers and approaches to potential employers.

RESULTS

After examining materials from throughout the United States, it became very apparent that there wasn't much written information or research on older adult employment. The most progressive research seems to have been conducted by the Andrus Gerontology Center in Los Angeles. Most of the research focused on recreation and health issues. There is a lack of information on concrete approaches to addressing the employment problems of older workers or methods of encouraging employers to hire this segment of the labor force.

See Addendum A, Research Resources.

Education:

Less Than High School	4%
High School	52%
College	32%
Graduate Degree	6%
Post Graduate Degree	6%

The participants served in this project had above average educational backgrounds. Only one did not have a high school degree and he completed his GED while enrolled in this project. Approximately one-half were high school graduates. One-third of the participants had four year college degrees. Examples of some of these degrees were: education, business administration, and technical areas such as engineering. Two had graduate degrees on the Masters level. Of these, one was an immigrant who had a degree in dentistry. His skills were not at a level acceptable for transference into the United States dental field. The other individual had a masters degree in Business Administration.

Two participants had Post Graduate level degrees. One was an immigrant who was a physician in his country of origin. Because of his age, it was not practical for him to pursue the studies required for liscensure in the United States, and he explored other areas. The other person had a Ph.D. in education and had experience in the social services field. He also explored a change in careers.

Marital Status:

Married	15 or approximately	48%
Divorced or Separated	7 or approximately	23%
Widowed	8 or approximately	26%
Single	1 or approximately	03%

Several of the married participants were experiencing marital discord.

29% of the participants spoke English as a second language. While these individuals were basically highly educated they did have special needs.

Length of Unemployment:

Underemployed or not seeking employment	16%
Unemployed less than 1 year	26%
Unemployed 1-2 years	39%
Unemployed 2 years or longer	19%

Eight of the participants had been unemployed less than one year. Twelve participants were unemployed from one to two years before enrolling this special project. Six of the participants had been unemployed for two years or longer.

SPECIAL NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

Besides an age barrier, many of the participants had other personal issues affecting their job search. Examples of these are:

1. Health difficulties such as:

   A. Arthritis
   B. Elevated blood pressure
   C. Previous heart surgery
   D. Back Problems
   E. Hearing Impairment
   F. Obesity

2. Values, expectations and feelings, including:

   A. Unrealistic employment and salary expectations. The participants' high salary expectations were based upon outdated employment data. Thus, they had unrealistic images and were initially unwilling to accept positions of lower status/salary than they had previously received.

   B. There was also hesitancy toward working in an environment of younger employees. Some took a negative view of working under younger, less experienced supervisors. Some stated that they thought they may have intimidated younger supervisors/employees during an interview.

   C. Feelings of frustration and anger were common. Most were frustrated trying to find a job in a difficult economic time. Job hunting in an employers' market resulted in feelings of discrimination, rejection and worthlessness.

      In many cases, this unresolved anger over the economic times, frustration over job terminations and discrimination issues during interviews affected employment interviewing with the anger surfacing during interviews.

   D. A compounding and serious problematic area was that many older workers feel that since they have worked many years in one company, or in one area, job and high salaries were "owed" them based on years of employment.

3. Aloneness was another complicating factor. These older adults tended to be isolated. They had no unemployed friends, their children were grown and had left home, many had no spouses.

Joblessness, always hard to swallow, hits older men and women especially hard. Their lives soured at a time when they were expecting to begin reaping the fruits of their labor and when they could be taking things a little easier. Attitudes became negative. They questioned their long cherished work values of honesty, loyalty and service. Often they felt isolated. They had lost their job and with that their sense of identity. They felt they had lost their place in society and were worthless. The House Aging Committee reports, and it correlates positively with our observations, that typically in a longer siege of unemployment persons are more prone to develop alcoholism, depression, insomnia and stress-related illnesses.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. Many participants had serious marital difficulties, were trying to resolve the recent breakup of their marriages or had not accepted the loss of a spouse through death or divorce. One-half of the participants were widowed, divorced, or in the process of separation, while enrolled in the project.

5. Older workers who received termination benefits expected to easily secure a new job and some did not actively pursue a full-scale job search before the benefits ended. Some of the participants were receiving unemployment compensation. A couple received severance payments from their last employers and settlements of company pensions. A couple of participants received inheritances while participants in the project. This resulted in their ability to be more selective as to the salary and position they would accept, and sometimes affected motivation negatively. Conversely the older workers in sound financial positions were able to accept shorter hours and lower salaries. On the other end of the spectrum, there were a limited number of participants who were on the brink of economic disaster. These participants were living off of their life savings and in danger of losing their homes, and so on.

ASSETS OF THE EXPERIENCED WORKER

EAC found that employers remain unconvinced of the assets of the older worker. Many corporations may retain the mistaken myth that the older worker cannot adapt and be retrained, therefore, preferring to hire "young blood". This project confirmed that older workers can be flexible and can be readily retrained. This project confirmed that older workers do possess proven skills, and that these workers are committed to a strong work ethic. We observed their punctuality and mature work attitudes. They take pride in their work, use their time efficiently and pay attention to detail. We observed that these older workers have an overwhelming sense of company loyalty. Basically, they had good work histories and were stable employees. We observed them searching for permanent positions and, therefore, they may be more likely than younger, restless individuals to stay longer.

EAC also found that in many cases there were more job and lifestyle options open to the older worker. In some cases, they had the flexibility of working either part or full-time or on a more flexible schedule.

We observed a burning desire for participants to be working and contributing. They longed to be productive and useful. Findings indicate that attendance is as good or better than younger workers and older workers experience less turnover. Recent studies of various sources have concluded that older workers not only bring to their jobs a wealth of knowledge and skills, but also have fewer short-term illness and absences and are basically more stable employees than younger individuals who are still making career decisions.

According to a study by Robert Half International, it was found that older workers are more conscientious and harder-working than younger workers. When the researchers asked which age group "steals" the most time by inattention to work the figures indicated were:

Under age 30	84%
30 - 45	06%
Over 45	10%

These figures are an indication of the maturity and strong work ethic of the older worker.

Since the Employment Action Center serves all age groups, our experience substantiates this study. The older workers attended all scheduled program services on a regular basis, being prompt and conscientious.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UTILIZATION OF EAC SERVICES

INTAKE

Intake is a pre-screening of applicants and determination of eligibility based upon labor force status, income and residency. The intake process involves extensive paperwork and discussion of personal and private information. It also involves securing permission for release of information from past employment and medical sources.

From an intake staff perspective, it was felt more time, patience, diplomacy and extra efforts were needed to take the older worker through the eligibility and intake process. The intake workers found it required extra effort to serve this population diplomatically. The intake workers found that the older worker, over 45, had a lower tolerance for a bureaucratic system. This was found especially true of male older workers. The intake workers found a high rate of ineligibility for JTPA applicants over 55 and even a high proportion over 60. The eligibility guidelines work against those with fixed incomes. A great deal of diplomacy was necessary because ineligible persons tended to become angry.

Some applicants felt the Older Worker Project was misrepresented. Some of these individuals misinterpreted the media material and responded under the assumption that EAC had jobs immediately available for them. Much clarification was necessary throughout the participants' involvement to explain clearly what the training portion of the program was. They misinterpreted the concept of On-The-Job Training, thinking that upon enrollment EAC had jobs waiting for them. Much clarification was necessary to dispel their assumptions.

Another misconception was that there would only be persons 45 and older in the EAC workshop groups, both Job Planning and Job Seeking Skills. Midway in the project an active attempt was made in intake and by the Project Counselor to clarify the misconception.

Most of the feelings of misrepresentation occured at the time of intake. It was not widely publicized that EAC's Older Worker Project was federally funded and that to participate it was necessary to meet poverty level guidelines. The publicity of this project as a Private Industry Council Project gave some applicants the impression that this was not a government funded project. Immediate clarification of such issues should occur consistently at intake and at the initial meeting with the counselor.

Also, it is advisable that the reason for requiring information from an applicant to determine eligibility be fully explained when the information is requested. Older workers were more suspicious of the need to provide such information than other age groups. Attempts to increase their comfort level with publicly funded programs are necessary to maximize the benefits they obtain from the program.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COUNSELING

Resulting from the wide variety and extent of intrapersonal/interpersonal conflicts and participant characteristics it was found that more counseling time, and additional services were necessary to work successfully with this population. In addition to career or vocational services and job seeking assistance, a number of participants were referred to a wide variety of community counseling services.

An individualized, flexible counseling approach was used. Not all participants used the same services. The vocational and psychological tests administered to assist with establishment of job goals varied by individuals. Not all participants were referred to EAC's Job Planning workshop. However, counseling staff have concluded that this workshop is useful for all older workers because of its emphasis on an individual's employment assets. It is the beginning of the process necessary to explore career path alternatives and current employment trends. Without this exploration older workers had difficulty altering their salary/career objectives.

Additional one-to-one and group counseling efforts beyond that which is typical with other age groups appeared necessary. These extra efforts were necessary due to: 1) the extensive length of time since the experienced worker last sought employment. 2) the vast change in employment seeking practices, and 3) a resistance to change beliefs and values that hindered their re-employment.

The participants enrolled in this program had a wealth of experiences and backgrounds. Experienced workers needed reinforcement of the value of their work experience and assistance in transferring their skills to occupations in a changing job market. Successful counseling, based upon the special needs of this group, may be more time-consuming and longer in duration. The time spent in job development may also be lengthier for this group due to the lack of employer responsiveness.

Participants entering the program often had unrealistic goals and self-expectations based upon an uninformed outlook on the job market. They had high salary expectations based upon their past performance and years of solid experience. Many of them had been earning high salaries and it only seems justified that they be confused. But, it was not uncommon for the unemployed experienced worker to have obsolete skills, and be unwilling to recognize that his/her skills were no longer current or in demand.

These problem areas were most successfully resolved through reality approaches. We found counseling of realistic goals and expectations to be vital along with re-education about how to find a job in today's job market. The Project Counselor used motivation techniques to counteract the discouraged attitude prevalent throughout this population. For example, she rescheduled the Support Group to Mondays so that participants began their week on a highly positive note and were more likely to actively conduct their job search. She allowed peer counseling to occur, so that the older workers were bolstered by their ability to assist each other.

Because many of these individuals were discouraged, encouragement was a basic counseling tool. Discouragement is often accompanied by lethargy, lack of

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

positive self-esteem and low activity. We therefore encouraged positive action steps. These steps included interviewing for information, self-evaluation, and self-assessment, and behavioral contracting. On site interviewing of employed persons is an excellent method of gaining current, first-hand information about the background necessary, salary and future job trends in their area of interest. Through exercises promoting self-evaluation and self-assessment we encouraged them to consider their values, interests, assets, aptitudes and individual needs when establishing job goals. Contracts included mutual agreements addressing participant activities and services to be provided by the EAC staff. These contracts were written. Participants received copies and understood that they were expected to be active on their own behalf. The EAC staff allowed for the expression of discouragement, frustration and anger. The peer support group also allowed an outlet for these feelings. The support involvement also served to meet some of the needs caused by loneliness.

Self-confidence and increased positive self-esteem were gained through role playing and rehearsal, e.g., video taping interviews and one-to-one assertiveness training. We strived to maintain a positive uplifting environment to assist participants in maintaining a realistic, positive success oriented attitude. Modeling by EAC staff of techniques and procedures that are currently effective in the job search process was extremely helpful in promoting the transition to similar behavior. Basically providing new information and counseling for insight were the keys to attitude and behavior change. We attempted to motivate them to take positive action on their own behalf.

Through post-employment follow-up we were able to continue to reinforce job adjustment and success. For further information on counseling approaches, reference Special Services section.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SPECIAL SERVICES

Based upon staff observations and the special needs of the participants, some special services were designed and offered to older workers in EAC's project.

SUPPORT GROUP

A support group limited to only persons age 45 and over was formed. Two-thirds of the enrolled participants took advantage of this opportunity for peer support and interaction. The support group was preceded by a special workshop presentor who represented private employers, mental health and both public and private/non-profit human service agencies. Listed are what appear to have been the most impacting presentations: How An Employer Makes Hiring Decisions, Financial Areas, Dealing With Depression During Unemployment, Community Resources, Work Attitudes and Expectations, Social Security Administration, Anger, How To Present A Positive Attitude In An Interview. The speaker presentations preceeding each weekly support group were not only informative, but they offered a special incentive to attend the meeting.

In this project we saw individuals with solid work records. They were loyal, dependable, long-term employees who found themselves unemployed, frequently from no fault of their own. They experienced a sense of rejection. They were in conflict, being rejected by employers yet firmly believing in their capabilities. They experienced both blatant and subtle, unspoken discrimination which limited their options.

This support group was extremely beneficial to participants. It assisted them in maintaining a positive attitude while job seeking. It offered friendship and support, during a critical and stressful time. It offered them a positive, accepting environment in which they could release their frustrations. This supportive interaction afforded them the opportunity to share ideas and proven solutions. The focus was on the present. It was an action-oriented group. The group shared excellent ideas based upon their years of wisdom, experience and talents. The group was a catalyst to action. There was a great deal of care and concern for one another, which is consistent with the value and attitudes of this age group. The qualities of reliability and dependability were evidenced. There was an overall burning desire to be productive and utilize their proven skills and talents. These older workers were crucially aware that they possess time-saving techniques, skills and talents that should be transferred to a younger generation of workers, but this can only occur if society employs our experienced workers, working side-by-side with the experienced workers of tomorrow.

The participants found it beneficial to interact over significant issues in a group of their peers. The staff of EAC found it worthwhile for the experienced worker to also participate in groups of various ages. The experienced worker has much to offer based upon past experiences. Inter-age group interaction also afforded the older worker alternative perspectives, enabling them to accept more responsibility for their employment difficulties.

Some participants developed a dependency on the support group and/or on the project. The amount of group involvement and participation in EAC services correlated positively with job placement. In conclusion, it is this writer's opinion that an unemployment peer support group is of great benefit to its participants. It is a vital and necessary portion of any successful program

designed to meet the special needs of the unemployed experienced worker. The positive benefits to the participants outweigh any resulting dependencies.

JOB CLUB

A job club was formed and operated for three months. Attendance was optional and very poor. Many who participated only attended periodically. This was a highly structured, job search activity. It was scheduled for a two-hour period Wednesday afternoons. The purpose of the job club was to offer a specific time each week in highly structured job seeking activities. Time was structured and utilized in placing cold calls, and practicing this technique. Participants also received additional assistance with resume and job application forms. Time was spent discussing employment opportunities. In the job club the focus was on action steps versus the verbalization of a support group.

This job club was not found to be successful. There was a resistance to the structured format and action orientation. A revised format might have been more effective. Possibly a less structured format might be more accepted by persons of this age. A peer buddy system might prove more effective because of the support and influence of peer interaction.

RESOURCE LIBRARY

As part of the special services a library of related resources was purchased to help meet the emotional and financial needs of the unemployed older worker as well as to update their job seeking skills. There is not a great deal of information available addressing the unemployed older worker's problems. A need was also identified for a survival manual, incorporating information on financial, legal, medical and mental health resources for the older unemployed individual.

See Addendum B for Resource Books found to address the needs of Older Workers.

CLASSROOM TRAINING

In view of the fact that many of these experienced workers possess outdated skills, short-term skill upgrading in a classroom environment was used to enhance their marketability. It was found that a number of these participants would consider classroom training of short duration. Four participants were involved in short-term classroom training while they were enrolled in an EAC program. One attended a two week course in real estate. Another upgraded his drafting skills. The third participant enrolled in a short-term clerical/bookkeeping program and the fourth learned computer programming.

JOB SEEKING/JOB DEVELOPMENT

The Project Counselor worked with participants on selective areas of job seeking skills and job development. Most of the participants were also assigned to a job developer who offered them intensive job search assistance. The job developers updated participants' resumes, polished rusty job seeking skills and sought job leads.

The completion of the Job Seeking Skills workshop was also strongly encouraged. All participants either completed this series or were employed prior to completion. While participating in the job seeking skills workshop,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the older workers were found to be more willing to spend extra time on homework assignments and more willing to improve upon their job seeking skills than other age groups. They were found to be more reluctant to express their qualities and skills. This may be a result of life's conditioning and values. They also were found to be somewhat slower to catch on to some new and very different concepts, such as skills matching. This may be a result of their lack of awareness of the vast changes in job marketability.

Through participation in the the Job Seeking Skills workshop they learned updated trends in job hunting. The interviewing process as well as the process of interviewing for information aided the participants in gaining a realistic view of their marketability.

One of the goals of the project was to explore employer acceptance of hiring older workers utilizing On-the-Job Training contracts. The intended purpose of an On-the-Job Training (OJT) contract was to upgrade and retrain the worker, and hopefully to make hiring an older worker more financially appealing. Employer interest and acceptance was very poor. Only two participants were placed on OJTs, and only one completed the contract. One employer was used for both contracts. The financial incentive provided employers through On-The-Job Training contracts did not appear to be sufficient. EAC limited employer reimbrusement to a maximum of $1,000 due to budget limitations. Employers realize greater financial gain hiring persons through MEED* and Targeted Jobs Tax Credit. For additional information reference section on Employer Response.

*MEED is the Minnesota Emergency Economic Development Act. Under MEED employers are reimbursed $4.00/hour for wages and up to $1.00/hour for fringe benefits during a six month period, or a maximum total reimbursement of $5,200.00.

EMPLOYER RESPONSE

When representing participants to employers, the job development staff met with a great deal of apathy. They found that, overall, industry acknowledges the problem but is not interested in actively hiring or recruiting older workers. In viewing their own company, they see older workers who have risen and those who have remained stagnant. It is with these colored lenses that they view the dilemma of the unemployed experienced person. The idea that you can earn your gold watch is obsolete. Today, the individual in the workplace must keep sharp, and look out for himself. The worker is urged not to lose his/her edge along the way and urged to keep abreast in his field.

The majority of participants in the project found positions in smaller companies. Realistically and pragmatically, why should a large corporation recruit and hire older workers when they have long-term employees on their payroll that they are trying to retire. As mentioned earlier, employers especially large firms, did not view On-the-Job Training contracts as an incentive to hire an untrained person. Monetary incentive was not sufficient to warrant the extra training and supervision. Just what amount of financial incentive would have been sufficient to stimulate hiring of older workers was not determined. It was only smaller companies that expressed an interest in OJT contracts.

EMPLOYER EDUCATION COMPONENT

Educational materials were developed which emphasized the positive reasons for hiring an older worker. A newsletter was designed to promote to employers the hiring of older workers. Also, an education brochure was developed. The newsletter included information about the Older Worker Project, experience employers have had hiring older workers, comments from individuals in the project who had obtained jobs and information on contacting EAC Job Developers. The newsletter was mailed to 290 employers.

After examining research during the first phase of the project it was decided that an educational brochure would be designed. An educational brochure was considered the most effective method to inform employers about the positive reasons to hire an "experienced worker." Also, this brochure was given to the person 45 and over as a positive resource in "selling" themselves in an interview.

The educational brochure was titled "Look to the Experienced Worker." The brochure briefly described "...reasons why the 45 and over worker is a better resource for you."

- Productivity
- Attitudes
- Low Absenteeism
- Education and Experience
- Training Costs
- Benefits

The term "Experienced Worker" was selected as the best way to represent persons 45 and over to employers. "Older" was deemphasized because of the negative connotations employers attach to this word.

Outreach materials and press releases did intentionally use the term "older worker." Many persons over 45 would not think they belonged in an "Experienced Worker" program. In particular, older women who were recently divorced or widowed or needed to begin working after raising a family would not consider themselves experienced.

"Look to the Experienced Worker" brochure is available to other organizations to be used in their employer education efforts. The brochure content may be changed, particularly the organization identifying information.

EAC has sent the experienced worker brochure to area employers, along with a letter from Job Development staff. EAC Job Development staff will continue to share the brochure with employers in the course or regularly contacting them.

PROGRAM RESULTS

In summary, meeting the previously stated special needs of the older worker through peer support groups, speaker presentations, special job seeking groups, extra program time and services in job development, and other previously listed efforts proved effective. The 71% placement rate of the participants in this project verifies the success of these approaches. The effectiveness of special services is also proven when noting the extensive length of time many of the participants had been unemployed. Three-fifths of the participants had been unemployed one year or longer.

The 71% placement success compares favorably to the placement results of other EAC programs and populations, despite the special needs and problems characteristic of the older worker population. The overall results would substantiate the need for ongoing special services of the nature available in this program to ensure the future reemployment of the unemployed older worker.

TERMINATION RESULTS

Total Enrolled	31
Positive Termination	24
Positive Termination Rate	77%
Terminated Employed	22
Placement Rate	71%
Average Starting Wage	*$5.10/Hour

*One individual reentering previous position @ $35/hour. Results in overall average starting wage of $6.48.

Twenty-four participants, or 77%, were terminated positively by JTPA classification. A positive termination results from a participant entering public or private sector employment, or being terminated into a full-time academic setting, or other training not funded under JTPA. A positive termination may also result from the participant transferring to another employment program. Employment may be either full or part-time.
The 77% positive termination rate represents participants primarily entering private sector positions. Two participants left the area and were transferred to employment programs in their new locations. Another participant entered a publicly subsidized job. 22 participants, or 71%, entered unsubsidized private sector positions either on a full or part-time status. The average starting wage for these positions was $5.10/hour. After participation in the project one participant returned to a previous sales position where he averages $35 an hour as an independent sales representative.

Some of these experienced workers were able to find positions utilizing some of their past experiences, e.g., individuals with clerical and office backgrounds were able to secure similar positions. Draftpersons, after extensive job seeking, were placed in various areas of drafting. Persons with backgrounds in household management, credit and collection, teaching and social services all transferred skills into various areas which did not necessarily utilize their past occupational skills. However, their individual assets and attributes were utilized on these jobs. For example, social service experience was transferred to real estate because of good skills in relating with a variety of people.

CONCLUSIONS

- Two methods of project recruitment were found to be highly effective in reaching the older unemployed person. The greatest response to recruitment of the older worker resulted from advertisements placed in the employment want ad section of the Sunday Minneapolis Star and Tribune. Older workers traditionally use the want ads for job hunting, accounting for the success this method. The response from church mailings and posters located in churches was also one of the most productive recruitment methods.

- In the project's service area a similar proportion of male and female unemployed persons over age 45 require assistance to reenter the job market. Many women needing to reenter/enter the job market at a later age are displaced homemakers. Many of the male participants were long-term unemployed as a result of displacement due to change from an industrial to a technological work force.

- The EAC Older Worker Project confirmed that through intensive program involvement, unrealistic attitudes and expectations which interfere with securing a job can be reduced.

- Many older workers have health problems which can't be eliminated. However, alternative placements can be found in which these conditions have not interfered with job performance. These placements may require employer awareness in the assignment of job duties.

- The older, experienced worker possesses company loyalty, punctual work habits as well as a mature attitude. He/she is strongly committed to the work ethic.

- In addition to the age barrier, many older workers had other personal issues requiring attention which affected their job search.

- Older workers need increased awareness of the importance of continuing education to update their skills. The Project experience indicates that short-term skill upgrading would, in many cases, have prevented unemployment or resulted in faster job market re-entry.

- Difficulties faced by persons age forty-five and over in the job market are primarily attributable to three factors. The first factor is the misconceptions, views and biases of the older worker regarding the job market. Second, outdated job skills and lack of job seeking skills contribute to their difficulty. The third major factor is the apathy and and resistance of employers to hiring older workers.

- The overall results of this project substantiate the need for specialized employment programs for older workers. Brief recruitment resulted in an outpouring of applicants. Employment programs can have impacting effects on the job market competitiveness of older workers. However, change is necessary on a larger scale, both in employer practices and national public policy. (See Recommendations, page 19.)

- Based on employer feedback, there is a need for incentive programs, such as the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit, to provide a sufficient incentive for employers, to hire the older worker. The financial incentive necessary to entice employers to hire older workers under traditional on-the-job training programs is not sufficient.

- Face-to-face education efforts with individual employers regarding the assets of older workers meet with very limited success. Employers are suspect of input from non-profit or public organizations. Employer organizations or groups will listen to speakers on this topic, but resultant employer action is rare. The written word is the best way to reach individual employers. Constant efforts to educate employers on retention and hiring of older adults are needed. Creative methods to bring this message to employers in non-threatening ways are needed.

- To work successfully with this age group, vocational counselors and other staff must exhibit extra tact, diplomacy and a willingness to provide empathy, time, and services such as peer support groups.

- Essential services to successfully address the employment needs of older workers are: intensive vocational counseling, skill assessment services, peer support group, referral to other community resources, short term training, job seeking skills training, job development assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

1. The older unemployed individual needs information on financial, legal, medical and mental health matters and resources. A comprehensive manual directed to the needs of this particular age group should be available.

2. More national information and research is needed regarding reemployment of older adults. In particular, awareness programs are necessary to positively promote a fuller utilization of the resources to be found in the background and skills of our nation's experienced workers.

3. A national older worker policy is essential to promote employment of the older worker.

4. More commitment in the private sector must be stimulated to promote retention of the older experienced worker on the payroll and hiring of this age group.

5. Older workers need to look to the future and to keep abreast of new trends and changes in the labor force. This can be accomplished through government awareness programs highlighting this issue.

6. Ongoing funding of local employment programs for older adults is necessary. Currently, minimal public funding is utilized for short-term demonstration programs.

ADDENDUM A

RESEARCH RESOURCES

All University Council on Aging - faculty and students interested in promoting research programming and curricular activities in aging at the University of Minnesota.

All University Council on Aging
1927 South Fifth Street
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Andrus Gerontology Center - articles on business attitudes toward older executives and managers; the shortage of workers and how the older worker will be a needed resource.

Employment and Retirement Division
Andrus Gerontology Center
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan - a similar demonstration project as that of Employment Action Center's program. This program provides staff training, technical assistance and advocacy. Information including brochures, newsletters.

Area Agencies on Aging
Association of Michigan
Plaza Center, 111 S. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48902

"Experience Works" - a how-to-kit from Operation Able Training manual on how to set up a program for workers 55 and over; a slide-tape on the selling points of the older worker; manual on personnel policies and procedures; volunteer recruitment, job development, job club and a film.

Operation Able, Inc.
36 S. Wabash Ave., Ste. 714
Chicago, Illinois 60603

"Older Americans" An Untapped Resource - a report by the National Committee on careers for older Americans. Small booklet giving many statistics on the older worker, past, present and future.

National Committee on
Careers for Older Americans
1414 22nd Street N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20037

"Second Career Opportunities for Older Persons" - information on making career choices, starting your own business, volunteer opportunties and continuing education. Training packet and brochures.

American Association of
Retired Persons
1909 K Street N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20049

NOTE: The following are two groups that deal with aging and employment in Minneapolis.

Metropolitan Consortium on Older Employees - representatives from the private, public and academic sectors. The objectives are to examine the present and future needs for and of the older employee in the workplace; to identify potential barriers and disincentives for the satisfactory employment of older employees; and raise the awareness for the potential of the older employee, keeping in focus the industry need. This committee presented a conference on "Planning for the Total Work Force in the Face of Change" which did address some key issues.

The Twin Cities Gray Panthers - a national organization advocating changes in society pertaining to ageism. Employment Action Center received a monthly newsletter.

ADDENDUM B

RESOURCE BOOKS PARTICULARLY USEFUL FOR PERSONS 45 AND OVER

1. Allen, George. Merry Christmas You're Fired! Simon and Schuster, 1982
2. Allen, Jeffrey G. How To Turn An Interview Into A Job. Simon and Schuster, 1983
3. Austin, Margaret F. and Vines, Harriet. Bridges to Success. Wiley Press, 1983
4. Azrin, Nathan H. and Besalel, Victoria. Finding A Job Ten Speed Press, 1982
5. Benson, Herbert. The Relaxation Response 1976
6. Bowes, James. How to get a Fast Start in Today's Job Market. Spectrum, 1980
7. Burke, Anna Mae. What Do You Want To Be Now That You're All Grownup? Prentice-Hall, 1982
8. Buskirk, Richard H. Your Career. Second Edition. CBI Publishing 1980
9. Harper, Maxwell J. and Pell, Arthur R. How To Get the Job you Want After 40. Pilot Books 1974
10. Marks, Edith and Lewis Adel. Job Hunting for the Disabled. Barron's Educational Series 1983
11. Mitchel, Joyce. Choices and Changes College Board Publications, 1983
12. Peskin, Dean B. A Job Loss Survival Manual. Amacom, 1981
13. Rubin, Theodore T. The Angry Book. Collier, 1969
14. Sherman, James R. Rejection Pathway, 1982
15. VanRoden, Albert C. and Bachhuber, Thomas D. You're Hired. Liberty Publishing, 1981
16. Warshaw, Leon J. Managing Stress. Addison-Wisley, 1979
17. Weiler, Nicholas W. Reality and Career Planning. Addison-Wesley, 1977